

Music Analysis and Singing Study of Brahms' Three Art Songs

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Abstract: *Johannes Brahms is a great composer in the history of Western music, and his works hold an important position in his works. As the last composer of the German ancient music school, he lived in the middle and late stages of Romanticism, following the development trend of Romanticism while also advocating classical and rationality. In Brahms' music creation, he integrated classical and romanticism. Brahms took Theo's music to a new level, and his songs are an indispensable part of Theo's music field. This article focuses on an in-depth study of his three songs: "We Wander", "Like That Soft Melody", and "I'm Faintly Sleeping". These three songs were all created by the author in his later years, and from the perspective of aesthetic orientation, creative techniques, and musical style, they can reflect Brahms' music creation style during this period more comprehensively.*

Keywords: *Brahms; Art songs; Music analysis; Singing Research*

1. Introduction

Art songs are a common learning and performance genre in the field of vocal beauty. In the past, due to some people's biases towards art songs, such as "small scale", "short length", "low pitch", etc., art songs were once looked down upon by some vocal learners and were considered unable to fully demonstrate their beautiful vocal skills. However, in recent years, these biases have no longer had a foothold in the domestic vocal industry. In fact, the music of art songs is more diverse and colorful than other types of songs. They not only have an elegant style, but also have a profound artistic conception. Therefore, performing art songs requires comprehensive artistic cultivation. In order to better perform artistic songs, vocal learners need to focus on cultivating their musical literacy and skills, including pitch accuracy, rhythm, breath control, sound control, and other aspects. At the same time, they also need to have a deep understanding of the meaning and artistic conception of the lyrics, as well as the emotions and thoughts expressed by the music. Only in this way can they truly interpret the essence of art songs, allowing the audience to feel the beauty and depth of music. As the pioneer of European art song genres, German and Austrian art songs have a solid tradition. Undoubtedly, the maturity, standardization, scientificity, systematicity of artistic forms, as well as artistic value and influence, are beyond the reach of any other art song genre. In the corridor of 19th century German and Austrian art songs, Brahms was a pivotal and pioneering composer who held a unique position in the history of 19th century art songs.

2. Overview of Brahms Art Song Creation

Brahms' artistic songwriting was an important component of his music career. His art song works are not numerous, but each capital is a carefully crafted masterpiece with extremely high artistic value and influence. Brahms's artistic song creation was deeply influenced by German Romantic poetry. He was skilled at perfectly combining the emotions and artistic conception of poetry with the melody and rhythm of music, creating works of art with profound connotations and unique styles. His artistic songs have beautiful melodies, rich harmonies, and rigorous structures, showcasing his profound musical expertise and outstanding creative talent. Brahms' artistic songs hold an important position in the history of music. His artistic songs are not only a representative of his personal music style, but also an important component of German romantic music. His artistic songs had a profound impact on later music creation and were widely sung and performed.

Brahms' artistic song creations from different periods demonstrate the evolution and maturity of his musical style. In the early days, Brahms' artistic song creation was influenced by Schumann, with a more romantic style that emphasized emotional expression and musical depiction. During this period, Brahms created about 87 art songs, which were greatly influenced by Schubert and folk music in their

composition. These songs maintain a classical order, mostly in the form of segmented folk songs. However, the harmony color is relatively single, and the piano accompaniment texture is also relatively simple. The piano accompaniment section generally only provides simple support for the singing melody, without too many complex harmonies and texture changes. Nevertheless, Brahms' art songs still demonstrate his unique understanding and pursuit of musical art. These songs have beautiful melodies and harmonious harmonies, expressing the author's insights into life, love, and nature. Meanwhile, Brahms also demonstrated his talent and charm in music creation through these works. Overall, although the creation of Brahms art songs during this period was subject to some limitations, it still had a unique style and characteristics. These works not only demonstrate Brahms' pursuit and understanding of music art, but also provide valuable reference and inspiration for later music creation. The representative works of this period include "Anne Sophie Mutt's Three Brahms Violin Sonatas" and "Complete Works of Brahms Piano Trio".

As time passed and entered the middle stage, Brahms' artistic song composition gradually matured, and he began to pay more attention to the structure and technique of music. This period was the heyday of Brahms' music creation, as well as an important period for him to gradually improve his artistic and social status. During this period, Brahms created approximately 117 art songs. With the increasing maturity of his creative techniques, he gradually attempted to use the form of general notation and changing segmented songs, and the harmony became more rich, with more flexible rhythmic movements of segmentation and punctuation. During this period, Brahms better mastered the emotional expression forms of art songs, and music became more lyrical. His art songs have beautiful melodies and harmonious harmonies, expressing the author's insights into life, love, and nature. Meanwhile, Brahms also demonstrated his talent and charm in music creation through these works. The works of this period were more rigorous and profound, showcasing his profound understanding and unique insights into music. Representative works include "If Only I knew the way back" and "Quiet in the Forest". In short, the mid-term of creation is a period of transformation for Brahms art songs. The artistic quality of his songs has significantly improved compared to the past, and also reflects more philosophical, introspective, and melancholic emotions.

In the later stages, Brahms's artistic song creation placed more emphasis on delicate descriptions of complex emotions or psychological feelings. He adopted classical or contemporary poet poetry, and his choice was not as strict as Schumann's. In the late stage of his creation, Brahms underwent some new changes in his music composition techniques and emotional expression techniques. In terms of piano accompaniment, the importance of the piano became more prominent during this period. It became more independent, no longer just as a support for singing melodies, but as an important component of the overall music. The harmony of piano accompaniment is filled or expanded with more complex textures, making the music more rich and colorful. At the same time, the emoticons on the score of songs during this period were also more concise. Brahms placed more emphasis on the inner emotions and expression of music in his later creative period, rather than relying too much on external markers. This concise expression makes music more pure and direct, and can touch people's hearts more deeply. Overall, Brahms music creation during this period placed greater emphasis on the role of piano accompaniment, as well as the concise and direct expression of emotions. These changes reflect Brahms' continuous exploration and innovation in music creation, and also bring us a richer and more profound music experience. Representative works of this period include "My Love is Youth" and "Four Serious Songs". The sad tone is always reflected in Brahms' songs, which is particularly evident in his later works. Brahms' artistic song creations at different times demonstrate the evolution and maturity of his musical style, from his early romantic style to his later delicate descriptions, all reflecting his talent and charm in music creation.

3. An Analysis of the Musical Ontology of Three Art Songs, including "We Wander"

Compared to other Romantic composers, Brahms' artistic song compositions exhibit a more traditional and rigorous style. His music and poetry are highly artistic and philosophical, deeply exploring the connotations of emotions and thoughts. Compared to the works of Schubert and Schumann, Brahms' works are more introverted and obscure in emotional expression, requiring deep understanding and perception.

When singing or re creating, the singer should base their work on the musical essence of the song. The analysis of music ontology involves multiple aspects of the song's musical structure, tonality, melody, rhythm, harmony, intensity, and lyrics. Only by fully understanding these basic elements can we accurately and deeply interpret the song. This article will select three works: "We Wander", "Like That

Soft Melody", and "I'm Falling asleep" as the research objects, and conduct a detailed analysis from three aspects: poetry content, song structure, and melody characteristics. Through these analyses, we can gain a deeper understanding of Brahms' songwriting intentions and characteristics, thereby helping singers better grasp and understand the work during performance, and better interpret the essence and connotation of the work. This understanding not only helps to improve singing skills, but also enables the audience to deeply experience and understand Brahms' musical world.

3.1 "We Wander "

3.1.1 Harmonic analysis

Brahms' art song "We Wander" is a work full of emotions and drama. The following are the key points for analyzing its harmony:

Brahms used the rules and patterns of classical harmony in his creation of "We Wander", such as using chords, chords, and off key chords to construct a harmonic framework. The use of these chords injects rich emotional colors into the song and forms a clear contrast and tension in the process of harmony. In "We Wander," Brahms reflects the emotional ups and downs of the lyrics through the dynamic changes in harmony. At the same time, during the tonal transition process, the harmony also undergoes corresponding changes, forming a clear contrast effect. "We Wander" presents a complete musical form in structure. Brahms ensures the integrity of harmony by using terminations. At the end of the song, he used a regular stop to wrap up the music, presenting a unified and complete image in harmony throughout the work. In summary, through the analysis of the harmony of Brahms' art song "We Wander", it can be seen that he used rich classical harmony techniques and unique creative techniques to perfectly combine music and poetry, presenting an emotional and dramatic music scene for the audience.

3.1.2 Curved structure analysis

"We Wander" is a trilogy style structure with new material contrasts, using a non square shaped variation of segmented songs. It consists of "prelude+A+B+Ai+epilogue", with a beat of 4/4, built on the D key, creating a unique emotional atmosphere,

Based on the emotional hierarchy of the three stanzas, Brahms intentionally divided the entire song into three paragraphs. The first paragraph is the theme phrase presented through three bars. The connection between the first and second paragraphs is played by the singing voice, which prepares for the entry of the second paragraph's material through the conversion of melody, rhythm, and tonality. The last part is the reproduction of the theme phrase, and the tail of the phrase is expanded and developed with a new musical image, so that its length can compete with the length of the first paragraph, forming a structural balance as a whole.

3.1.3 Melody characteristics

Brahms' melody creation is always full of poetry and emotions. The melody of "We Wander" portrays the protagonist as seemingly lonely, yet imbued with rich emotions within. When composers create melodies, they mostly use the form of large-scale jumps, and the melodies they sing often have a downward trend. This feature is reflected throughout the entire piece, and in "We Wander", he uses rich notes and harmonies, making the melody lines beautiful and expressive. The ups and downs of the melody echo the emotions of the lyrics, making the song more infectious. Brahms used various melodic techniques in "We Wander", such as expanding and shrinking intervals, changing sound zones, etc., to make the melody more layered and dynamic while maintaining its beauty. Brahms places great emphasis on the combination of harmony and melody.^[1] In "We Wander," he cleverly employs changes in harmony to enrich the color of the melody, making it more full and three-dimensional. Brahms used rich rhythmic variations in "We Wander" to make the melody more vivid and dynamic. At the same time, he also attaches great importance to the harmonious unity of rhythm and melody, making the song maintain a beautiful melody while also having a strong sense of rhythm.

3.2 "Just like that gentle melody"

3.2.1 Harmonic analysis

"Just Like That Soft Melody" is the first song in Brahms' work number 105, created in 1886. In this song, Brahms uses rich harmonic techniques to inject rich emotional colors and musical levels into the song. Brahms applied the basic rules of classical harmony, such as triads, triads, and off key chords, in

"Like That Soft Melody". The use of these chords provides a stable harmonic foundation for the song, while also providing possibilities for subsequent harmonic changes. In the song, Brahms expresses the emotional changes of the lyrics by using different harmonic colors. For example, in describing the gentle melody, he used soft triads to create a peaceful and beautiful atmosphere. In the description of intense emotions, he used off key chords and tense harmonies to express the conflict and tension of emotions. In "Just Like That Soft Melody," Brahms cleverly uses terminations to end phrases or paragraphs. These terminations not only ensure the integrity of the harmony, but also inject a sense of stability and ending into the song. Brahms used rich tonal changes in his songs to express the emotional ups and downs of the lyrics. Through tonal transformation, he successfully combined emotional changes with musical changes, making the song more dramatic and infectious.

3.2.2 Curved structure analysis

"Just like That Soft Melody" is a segmented song form consisting of four parts: "A+A+A2+Endplay", consisting of three basically identical sections. The original key is A major, and this article selects C major as an example for analysis. This work also reflects Brahms as a bridge between classical and romantic music, continuing the balanced and symmetrical structure advocated in the classical era in different ways.

Brahms has a distinctive feature in the structure of "Like That Soft Melody", which is that he repeats to varying degrees at the end of three paragraphs, thereby expanding the length of the sentence. The first paragraph contains two contrasting "a+b" sections, which, due to the expansion of this piece and the addition of three sections, is a non planarized "5+7" style section with an unstable ending on the dominant chord in C major. The length of the second section of the music is the same, it is in an "atb" style. The first part of the second section is fully copied, and the second part of the second section inherits the musical elements of the previous section. [2] There are some subtle changes in the development of the melody, and the ending of the section ends with a V-level lower middle chord, which is an extension because the performance here adds two bars. The third paragraph continues to develop, becoming "a+b," due to the frequent repetition of poetry and the richer development of music at the end of the piece, this phrase is added to 11 bars, occupying most of the content of the entire piece.

3.2.3 Melody characteristics

This song, like most of Brahms' works, does not initially use a piano prelude, but instead uses two main chords to suggest the singer's pitch, and then moves the voice from low beats to another position. The melody of the theme phrase presents a smooth and gentle feature, with the opening line resembling a parabolic rise and fall, showcasing the theme of "love is like a beautiful piece of music blowing in my heart" to the fullest. The piano accompaniment uses "wave like" large lines to decompose the texture of chords, echoing the continuous rhythm, making the above singing more smooth. The subsequent melody unfolds in a three degree up and down spiral, and uses quarter notes to enhance the tone, making the image of verbs more intuitive. The piano accompaniment texture also becomes an upward decomposition, as if to highlight the poet's gentle emotions.

4. "I am falling asleep in a daze"

4.1 Harmonic analysis

The most imaginative and creative aspect of this song lies in its breakthrough in melody, as well as its creative handling of piano accompaniment and harmony. Here, unlike the previous harmonic effects, the addition of tonal colors is characterized by the use of continuous long-range tone transitions in the lower A major, as well as multiple bass four or six chords separated by a bar. The continuous downward progression development greatly enhances the sound color of the bass, creating a dreamlike dream for the protagonist at this time, which is very distinctive.

4.2 Curved structure analysis

The song "I am falling asleep in a daze" is composed of "A+B+interlude A+B ending", with a structure of repeated changes in the form of two parts. The beat is 2/2, and the piano interlude tightly connects the front and back parts of the song, making the four paragraphs connected into a whole that is both repetitive and evolving. The exquisite structure of this song's musical form is that Brahms fully understands the drama in Ringer's poetry, using exquisite musical language to depict a protagonist who still yearns for love even in death. The four parts of the song achieve balance and symmetry in the

sentence structure.

4.3 Melodic characteristics

The biggest feature of this song is that Brahms uses gentle melodic lines to express the protagonist's sadness and lamentation emotions, coupled with the use of long and short punctuation rhythms and rest notes, making the phrases intermittent and short in duration, vividly depicting a body image with poor breath and mental confusion. ^[3]For example, in the theme motivation section of the song, the melody adopts a quarter point rhythm, moving up and down around the dominant note, and then down to a main note. During this process, a third interval is also added to adjust, and the use of the last quarter note also shows the weak and short breathing of the male protagonist. The development of piano accompaniment and melody in this section presents a single modality, with the piano melody voice closely following the human voice, and the lower voice acting as a accompaniment in the harmony. The harmony effect renders the atmosphere of this moment to the fullest.

5. Analysis of the Performance of Three Art Songs, including "We Wander"

5.1 The Pronunciation and Pronunciation of Lyrics

When singing German songs, in order to maintain the coherence of the phrases, it is common to connect the consonant at the end of the previous word with the vowel at the beginning of the following word. This linking technique is also applicable in the singing of German songs. However, it should be noted that German pronunciation requires each vowel and consonant to be pronounced clearly, so when connected, the preceding consonant usually appears in a weak form, giving the impression of omission. Therefore, when singing German songs, special attention should be paid to the accuracy and clarity of pronunciation to ensure the singing effect of the song. German word stress is one of the most prominent features in the German language, and the stress of each word or syllable can have a significant impact on the meaning and rhythm of German words. Therefore, singers must understand the stressed syllables of words in order to convey the correct meaning to the audience. In German songs, the intonation of the lyrics is largely influenced by the melody of the song, and the stress is sometimes influenced by the strength of the beat, but it can also be reflected through our tone and pronunciation. During the singing process, tone and biting skills are crucial for expressing emotions. Singers can express the emotions of a song through the ups and downs of their tone and the clarity of their pronunciation. For example, in the description of the wandering between lovers in "We Wander", a soft and gentle tone and bite can be used; When describing the emotional entanglement between love and non love, one can use a deep and helpless tone and bite words.

5.2 Emotional processing in singing

When performing a work, singers can better express the emotions and connotations of the song by accurately grasping the emotional expression and processing techniques in the song, enabling the audience to understand and feel the charm of the song more deeply. In addition to solving technical problems, it is more important to carefully study the artistic conception of the song and the rich emotions contained in the lyrics, and use sound to convey to the audience.

When singing "We Wander", it is necessary to express the emotions in the song to the fullest. When singing "Soft Melody", it is necessary to express the emotions in the song in a soft and delicate manner. The emotions in the song are gentle and romantic, with both a longing for love and a love for life. Therefore, when singing, it is necessary to integrate this emotion into the singing voice, expressing the emotions of the song through the softness and delicacy of the voice. At the same time, attention should be paid to the coherence and fluency of emotions, and the emotions in the song should be expressed more naturally and fluently. When singing "I am falling asleep in a daze", it is necessary to express the emotions in the song in a mysterious and dreamy way. The emotions in the song are vague and mysterious, with both a longing for dreams and an escape from reality. Therefore, when singing, it is necessary to integrate this emotion into the singing voice, expressing the emotions of the song through the mystery and dreaminess of the voice. At the same time, attention should be paid to the contrast and contrast of emotions, in order to express the emotions in the song more vividly and prominently.

5.3 The mutual coordination between singing and piano accompaniment

When singing "We Wander", the singer needs to work closely with the piano accompaniment to create the atmosphere and emotions of the song together. Piano accompaniment needs to provide a stable foundation for the singer, enhancing the emotional expression of the song through changes in harmony and timbre. At the same time, the singer needs to keep pace with the piano accompaniment to ensure the accuracy of rhythm and pitch. During the singing process, the singer can better grasp the emotions and rhythm of the song through the guidance of piano accompaniment, making the singing more natural and smooth. When singing "Soft Melody", piano accompaniment needs to create a gentle and romantic atmosphere for the singer. Piano accompaniment can provide a good background for singers through soft timbre and delicate harmony. At the same time, the singer needs to maintain close coordination with the piano accompaniment, ensuring the unity of timbre and emotional coherence. During the singing process, the singer can better express the emotions and connotations of the song through the guidance of piano accompaniment, making the audience feel the charm of the song more deeply. When singing "I'm Faintly Sleeping", the piano accompaniment needs to create a mysterious and dreamy atmosphere for the singer. Piano accompaniment can provide a good background for singers through dreamy tones and mysterious harmonies. At the same time, the singer needs to maintain close coordination with the piano accompaniment, ensuring the unity of timbre and emotional coherence. During the singing process, the singer can better express the emotions and connotations of the song through the guidance of piano accompaniment, making the audience feel the charm of the song more deeply.

6. Conclusions

Through Brahms' works, people can see the rich romantic emotions hidden within, and the expression of these emotions is controlled by the composer's rationality. Through the analysis and singing of Brahms' songs, the author deeply understands that he abandoned fancy techniques in his creation and used simple and authentic melodies to interpret the rich and profound emotions in his heart. He combines prose like poetic clauses and highly colorful harmonic language to perfectly unify the musical image with the lyrics. This not only exudes the fragrance of classicism, but also reflects his intricate connection with the spirit of the Romantic era.

By analyzing the music structure, melody characteristics, and harmony application of these three songs, we have gained a deeper understanding of Brahms' unique style and characteristics in artistic song creation. Meanwhile, through singing research, we have explored how to better express the artistic connotations and emotions of these works during singing. Firstly, from the perspective of music analysis, Brahms' art songs have a rigorous structure and rich musical language. His works usually take the form of segmented songs, with beautiful and smooth melodies that are easy to sing. At the same time, he also utilized rich harmony and texture filling or expansion to make the music more rich and colorful. These characteristics make Brahms's art songs unique in music history and deeply loved by people. Secondly, from the perspective of singing research, Brahms' art songs have high singing difficulty. When performing these works, it is necessary for the singer to have a solid musical foundation and good singing skills. At the same time, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the artistic connotation and emotions of the work, in order to better express the artistic charm of the work. In this study, we employed various methods to analyze and study these three art songs. This includes an analysis of the musical essence of the work, research on singing techniques, and research on emotional expression of the work. Through these research methods, we have gained a deeper understanding of the creative characteristics and singing requirements of Brahms art songs, providing useful reference and guidance for singers.

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